



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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September 11, 2002

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members

FROM: Carl Osaki, WSBOH Environmental Health Committee

RE: PROMOTING BEST PRACTICES AT LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS:
INTEGRATION OF THE *ESSENTIAL SERVICES* INTO ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH PRACTICE

Background and Summary:

Several analyses of the public health system in the United States have found that the public health infrastructure is in “disarray” and is fragile (e.g., the 1988 Institute of Medicine Report, *The Future of Public Health; Public Health in America*, 1994). The Essential Public Health Services were developed collaboratively by local, state, and federal public health organizations and agencies, to identify and improve the basic functions of public health, strengthening the public health infrastructure.

My presentation on “Integrating the Essential Services into Environmental Health Practice” will lay out a framework for improving environmental health programs’ ability to protect public health (please see materials behind Tab 11). The presentations by local health departments highlight “best practices” that implement several of the Essential Services of Environmental Health:

- Monitor health status to identify environmental health problems
- Inform, educate and empower people about environmental health problems
- Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve environmental health problems
- Link people to needed environmental health services.

Many of the regulatory and policy issues that come before the State Board of Health, such as food safety, school indoor air quality, and on-site wastewater treatment systems, rely on local health departments’ ability to perform the Essential Services and protect public health. As part of the Board’s Environmental Health work plan, the Environmental Health Committee will be making recommendations to promote best practices such as those you will hear about today.

Programs that are best practices, but not mandated, may be threatened by cuts in public health funding. A discussion of possible strategies to ensure ongoing and new implementation of Essential Services will follow the presentations.

Recommended Board Action:

No formal action recommended, participation in discussion requested.